

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 918

By Brown

A RESOLUTION relative to the 2008 Black History Month program hosted by the Tennessee Black Caucus of the State Legislators.

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those commemorative events that are celebrations of our heritage and culture; and

WHEREAS, one such worthy commemorative event is Black History Month, which recognizes and promotes the significance of Black History in Tennessee and is observed throughout the month of February; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee has a long and proud history of exemplary educational organizations that have made significant contributions, through an abiding commitment to academic excellence, to the African-American community of this State; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee boasts seven historically black colleges and universities that have contributed to the betterment of our State for nearly 150 years, providing a rich heritage of education for our children and producing a multitude of esteemed graduates in several specialty areas; and

WHEREAS, founded in 1866, Fisk University has the great distinction of being the oldest of the seven historically black colleges and universities in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University is affiliated with the United Church of Christ and is home to the world-famous Fisk Jubilee Singers, who have brought international acclaim to the prestigious university and whose first members performed for historical figures such as Mark Twain, President Ulysses S. Grant, Johann Strauss, and Queen Victoria; the group was originally formed to raise funds for the then-struggling Fisk University and they accomplished this goal, and raised enough money to build Jubilee Hall, the first permanent structure in the

South for the education of black students and one of only twenty-seven buildings in Tennessee recognized as a National Historic Landmark by the United States Department of the Interior; and

WHEREAS, Fisk faculty and alumni have been among America's intellectual, artistic, and civic leaders in every generation since the school's founding and include the co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), W.E.B. DuBois; notable artist Aaron Douglas; Percy Lavon Julian, the first African-American chemist; and award-winning author, Nikki Giovanni; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University continues to play a central role in the shaping of young black minds under the capable leadership of its current President, Hazel O'Leary, who previously served as President Clinton's Secretary of Energy, President and Chief Operating Officer of Blaylock & Partners, and Founder and President of the international energy-consulting firm, O'Leary & Associates; and

WHEREAS, the second oldest historically black college in Tennessee traces its beginnings to 1871, when the LeMoyne Normal and Commercial School officially opened; and

WHEREAS, under the astute leadership of its third principal, Andrew J. Steele, the prominent institution experienced three decades of tremendous growth and development; and

WHEREAS, in 1914, the school's first building, Steele Hall, was erected at LeMoyne's current location, and the school continued to rapidly develop as it became a junior college in 1924, a four-year college in 1930, and was chartered by the State of Tennessee in 1934; and

WHEREAS, Owen College, named after a religious and civic leader, was founded in 1947 and opened as a junior college in 1954 before merging with LeMoyne in 1968; the merger of these two religious institutions reinforced a shared purpose of combining a liberal arts education with career training in a Christian setting – a purpose that continues to be carried out today under the able leadership of Interim President Johnnie B. Watson; and

WHEREAS, founded in 1875 as part of a missionary effort of the United Presbyterian Church, Knoxville College grew from serving as a freedman's elementary school to becoming the leading supplier of teachers to black schools in East Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Knoxville College distinguishes itself by emphasizing the building of close relationships between students and faculty while offering a strong foundation in the liberal arts

and a variety of major programs, preparing students for professional careers, graduate study, and professional study; and

WHEREAS, the estimable Dr. Robert Harvey currently serves as the interim President of Knoxville College and, during his illustrious thirty-seven years with the school, he has admirably served as Department Head, Academic Dean, and Vice-President; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of Knoxville College, Dr. Harvey has served in several other prominent positions, including as Consultant for the U.S. Department of Education, the Louisiana State Department, the Texas Higher Education Commission, and others; he has also received many prestigious awards, such as the Meritorious Service Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Science Foundation, making him one of the most distinguished alumni of Knoxville College. Other notable alumni include editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, George E. Curry; legendary Florida A&M University football coach Jake Gaither; and Dr. Edith Irby Jones, who was the first female President of the National Medical Association; and

WHEREAS, Meharry Medical College was founded in 1876 and during its illustrious 132 years of existence has become the largest private historically black institution in the United States solely dedicated to educating healthcare professionals and scientists; and

WHEREAS, originally founded as the medical department of Central Tennessee College, which later became known as Walden University, the medical department received a separate charter from the university and became Meharry Medical College; and

WHEREAS, today, Meharry Medical College offers a wide range of advanced degrees and graduate programs in the health sciences and has a medical school, dental school, graduate school, and an allied health school which offer, Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Dental Surgery, Master of Science in Public Health, Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees; Meharry also has the distinction of being the second largest educator of African-American medical doctors and dentists in the United States in addition to producing the largest number of African-American Masters in Public Health and Doctors of Philosophy in biomedical science graduates; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Wayne J. Riley presently leads Meharry as President in its quest to improve the health of minority and underserved communities through excellent education; Meharry boasts an impressive list of notable alumni, such as Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi; President of the American Heart Association, Dr. Edward S. Cooper; former President of the National Medical Association, Dr. Sandra Gadson; former Deputy Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Audrey F. Manley; Dr. Charles H. Wright, founder of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African-American History; and many others; and

WHEREAS, located in Jackson, Tennessee, Lane College has enjoyed an 126-year tradition of educational progress since its establishment in 1882; primarily a liberal arts institution, Lane College's original purpose was to ensure that newly freed slaves would be able to "read, write, and speak correctly"; and

WHEREAS, the college played a significant role in reducing the rate of illiteracy among African-Americans in the South in less than fifty years, and the faculty and staff have employed a collaborative approach to establishing a revived culture of student-centered, technology-enhanced teaching and learning; and

WHEREAS, this innovative teaching style is implemented under the guidance of Lane College's ninth President, Dr. Wesley McClure, who graduated with honors from Lane College before receiving advanced degrees from the University of Virginia and the Institute for Educational Management of Harvard University; and

WHEREAS, Lane College has been the beneficiary of Dr. McClure's wealth of administrative experience, as he previously served as the President of Virginia State University, Chancellor of Southern University in Baton Rouge, Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Executive Assistant to the President at St. Augustine's College, Dean of Faculty and Instruction at Clark College, and Assistant to the President and Title III Coordinator at Lane College. Dr. McClure is also a talented mathematician, educational analyst, and speaker who has spoken eloquently before Congressional committees, the United States Department of Education, and a variety of prestigious professional organizations and rendered impeccable service as a board member of a multitude of committees and organizations; and

WHEREAS, established in 1912, Tennessee State University (TSU) was founded as a land-grant institution in accordance with Public Chapter 115 of 1925 and is the only state-funded historically black university in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, during its ninety-six year existence, TSU has grown from an original enrollment of 247 students to its current enrollment of 8,750 attending the school's two campuses, five colleges, three schools, and Institute of Government; TSU also awards forty-two baccalaureate degrees, twenty-one master's degrees, associate's degrees in nursing and dental hygiene, and doctoral degrees in public administration, administration and supervision, curriculum and instruction, psychology, biological sciences, computer information systems engineering, and physical therapy; and

WHEREAS, on July 1, 1979, the former University of Tennessee at Nashville merged with TSU, making TSU not only one of America's preeminent historically black universities, but also an emerging comprehensive, national university that has produced a distinguished roster of alumni which includes State Senator Thelma Harper, Olympic gold-medalists Wilma Rudolph and Ralph Boston, media personality Oprah Winfrey, several notable jazz musicians, and numerous professional football and basketball players; and

WHEREAS, despite its long history, TSU has only had seven presidents, and Dr. Melvin N. Johnson currently serves in the prominent position; Dr. Johnson brings a wealth of academic and leadership experience to the post, having previously rendered superb service as Provost and Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and tenured Professor of Economics at Winston-Salem State University, senior academic roles at North Carolina A&T State University, and teaching roles at the United States Air Force Academy. Dr. Johnson also bravely served his country as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force, received many degrees in economics, business, and public policy, and garnered several prestigious fellowships and other honors; and

WHEREAS, the American Baptist College (ABC) was born from the cooperation of both the National Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention to establish a college for the training of African-American Baptist ministers; established in 1924, ABC is the youngest of the historically black colleges and universities of Tennessee and since its inception, it has educated

civil rights champions, national leaders, and outstanding Christian ministers, firmly living up to its mission of training men and women for Christian leadership; and

WHEREAS, since 1999, Dr. Forest E. Harris, Sr., has led ABC through many milestones while also serving on Vanderbilt University's Divinity School faculty and as the Director of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies for the past eighteen years; he is a much sought-after speaker who travels extensively for the purpose of enlightening the masses on human rights issues; and

WHEREAS, by increasing college access and improving higher education in Tennessee, the historically black colleges and universities of Tennessee have stood as a bastion of excellence in academics and in life, molding young minds into the scholars and leaders of tomorrow; and

WHEREAS, some of these leaders include members of our own Body who either attended or graduated from the historically black college and universities, such as TSU's Representative Barbara Cooper, Representative Brenda Gilmore, Representative Ulysses S. Jones, Representative Susan Lynn, Representative Mary Pruitt, Representative Mike Turner, Senator Ophelia Ford, and Senator Thelma Harper and LOC's Speaker Pro Tempore Lois DeBerry, Representative Larry Miller, Representative Gary L. Rowe, and Representative Joe Towns, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, these eminent institutes of higher learning will be specially recognized at the 105th General Assembly's 2008 Black History Month program on February 25, 2008, which is hosted by the Tennessee Black Caucus of State Legislators; it will be a time of reflection on the past, thanksgiving for the present, and anticipation of the future; and

WHEREAS, the program will include historian Ms. Linda T. Wynn, who is the Assistant Director for State Programs and has been with the Tennessee Historical Commission for nearly thirty years; Ms. Wynn is a distinguished faculty member of Fisk University's Department of History and a prolific author who has been published as an author, editor, advisor, or contributor almost 100 times in various historical publications; and

WHEREAS, Linda Wynn has also been named twice in *Outstanding Young Women of America* and was listed in the 1995 edition of *Who's Who in the South and Southwest* and the 1996 edition of *Who's Who in the World*; and

WHEREAS, in addition, Ms. Wynn has lent her expertise of African-American history and culture to a multitude of worthwhile organizations and committees, generously serving as a founding member of the award-winning Nashville Conference on Afro-American Culture and History; Secretary of the Legislative Task Force Committee on African-American History in Tennessee's Public Schools; Co-Chairperson for the conference on Tennessee women's history, *Shaping a State: The Legacy of Tennessee Women*; Co-Chair of the award-winning local conference on African-American Culture and History; a member of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on the History of Nashville; a consultant to the Secretary of State's office; and a member of the Nashville Public Library's Civil Rights Room Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, the event will be a time of tribute to the brave souls of the African-American pioneers who gave their all to uphold the American way of life for people of all cultural backgrounds; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby commemorate and honor Black History Month, reflecting upon the immeasurable contributions African-Americans have made to this State, and salute the participants of the 2008 Black History Month program, hosted by the Tennessee Black Caucus of the State Legislators, for their inspired presentations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we applaud and honor the seven historically black colleges and universities, Fisk University, LeMoyne-Owen College, Knoxville College, Meharry Medical College, Lane College, Tennessee State University, and American Baptist College, for their commitment to higher education for all people, regardless of color and socio-economic status, and their meritorious service to the citizens of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.